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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [RO](#)
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT SUSPENDS PRESIDENT BASESCU

REF: A. A) BUCHAREST 385
[1](#)B. B) BUCHAREST 415

Classified By: Political Counselor Theodore Tanoue for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Romanian Parliament on April 19 voted 322 to 108 (10 abstentions) to suspend President Traian Basescu for 30 days. The suspension should go into effect April 20 after the Constitutional Court notes the decision and it is published in the Official Gazette. Basescu's staff announced he would wait for the decision to be published before carrying out his earlier promise to resign if suspended. If Basescu should resign, this would trigger a procedure to hold early presidential elections within 90 days. A decision to remain as President under the thirty-day terms of reference for suspension would mean a national referendum on whether the President can remain in office. The anti-Basescu camp appeared to revel in the president's suspension. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The vote to suspend President Basescu, cast by secret ballot, tallied 322 to 108, with 10 abstentions,

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despite the ruling by the Constitutional Court that suspension of the President was not justified constitutionally. The president of the Senate, Social Democrat (PSD) Nicolae Vacaroiu will become interim president.

[1](#)3. (C) Some commentators and Democratic Party representatives have raised the prospect of parliament's following Lithuania's precedent by passing a law in the interim period barring suspended presidents from competing in presidential elections. Basescu's "pause" to carry out his April 13 promise "to resign within five minutes of suspension", may reveal his uncertainty whether parliament would actually take the next step to bar him from a presidential election, and thus change the rules of the game while he is out of office. Extreme nationalist and Greater Romania Party (PRM) leader Vadim Tudor has taunted Basescu for not resigning, saying he lacks character and is "a man of evil, of the past." Basescu maintained that his suspension had no constitutional justification, and in fact represented another step backwards from democratic governance. He said the Parliament had acted against him because he had challenged the oligarchic order in post-communist Romania.

[1](#)4. (C) A simple majority vote from a joint session of parliament (235 out of 469) was necessary to suspend the president. The final tally of 322 means that the Social Democrats (PSD), Conservatives (PC), and the Greater Romania Party (PRM) would have voted for the suspension, but also so did most of the Liberal Party and their ethnic Hungarian

ruling partners in the UDMR. It would appear that only the Democratic Party's (PD) seventy legislators and the Liberal Democratic Party's (PLD) twenty-seven parliamentarians, along with eleven independents voted against the suspension. PM Tariceanu tried to appear above the fray by abstaining from the vote and allowing Liberal Party members to vote as they pleased. But his anti-Basescu comments to the media today made it clear he is squarely behind the suspension effort.

15. (C) The ball is now with the constitutional court, which is likely but not certain to give its assent to the suspension decision soon, possibly within hours. Also uncertain is whether President Basescu will fulfill his pledge to resign and call for snap presidential elections within 90 days. But indications are growing that he may in the end decide to contest a referendum in the shorter 30-day suspension time frame rather than risk being barred by a hostile Parliamentary legislative initiative from contesting a new presidential contest.

16. (C) Comment: Parliament's vote highlights the fact that the level of political maturity in Romania remains well below what we would hope to see in a NATO and EU member state. The Parliament, marching to the tune of the old-style post-Communist business and political elites, turned down a path that may have enduring consequences for Romanian democracy. Yet the people have yet to speak out. If Basescu has his way, the Parliament may find out that it is not in control of events after all. End Comment.

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